

STATE OF UTAH GENERAL OUTLOOK

Feb 1, 2006

SUMMARY

January was a continuation of the weather patterns that favored northern Utah and brought at least a little more precipitation and snowpack to the southern areas. In northern Utah, the January snow accumulations were 123% to 144% of the normal monthly totals, by all accounts, a fantastic month. Snowpacks now range from 111% of average over the Uintah Basin to 142% on the Bear River. Looking ahead to April 1 of this year, given the current snowpack, the Bear River Watershed has a 91% probability of at least average snowpack this year. That is to say, it would take the worst possible climatic scenario to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory at this point. With just a couple more good storms, the Bear will be at its average April 1 value and everything that comes thereafter will put it further into the bonus area. Other watersheds in northern Utah also have above average probabilities of getting at least average snowpacks or above this season: Weber - 94%, Provo - 80% and the Uintah's 66%. Down south, the outlook is not nearly as rosy with probabilities ranging from a low of 26% in southwest Utah to a high of only 51% in southeast Utah. It is more likely that these areas will have a poor runoff year - pretty much feast or famine when comparing this year to last year. Soil moisture values in water producing areas has been interesting, normally they start to slowly increase this time of year and in northern Utah, that is what we see, but in southern Utah from the Sevier River Basin south, soil moisture values are declining. Soil moisture values are significantly less (10% to 45%) than last year across the state, with southern Utah experiencing the greatest declines. This could have a significant impact on spring runoff, particularly in the south. Overall, soil moisture values range from 10% to 56% of saturation in the upper 24 inches of soil. The mild temperatures that have occurred over most of this winter have impacted lower elevation snowpacks. Lower elevation snowpacks in southern Utah range from 0% to about 30% of average. Precipitation for January was much above normal at 134%. This brings the seasonal precipitation, (Oct-Jan) to 115%. Low reservoir storage is becoming less of a concern with total reservoir storage at 67% of capacity, up 25% from last year. The area of greatest drought concern is the Bear River with current reservoir storage at only 24% of capacity and the emerging drought conditions in southern and southeastern Utah. In general, most areas of the state have excellent reservoir carryover. General water supply conditions are near average and have been improving over the past year with the exception of southern Utah. Streamflow forecasts range from 10% to 162% of average. Surface Water Supply Indices range from 21% on the Bear River, to 84% on the Provo.

SNOWPACK

January first snowpacks as measured by the NRCS SNOTEL system range from 54% in southwest Utah to 142% on the Bear River Watershed, a complete reversal of last year. Northern snowpacks are similar or in the case of the Bear, higher than last year. Low elevation snowpacks are below normal pretty much statewide. While there are still 2 months of winter yet to come and any outcome is still possible, this should be an excellent water supply year in the north and appears to be relatively poor in the south.

PRECIPITATION

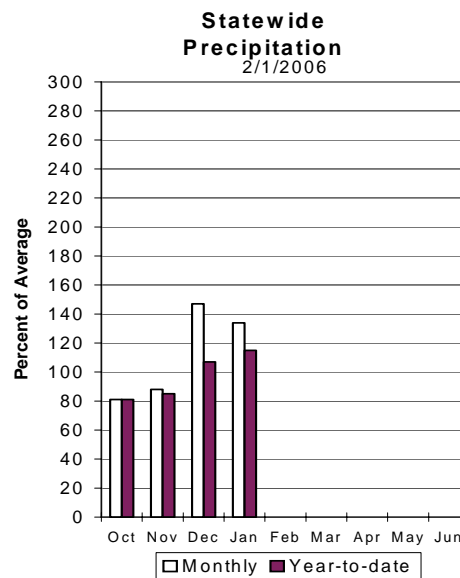
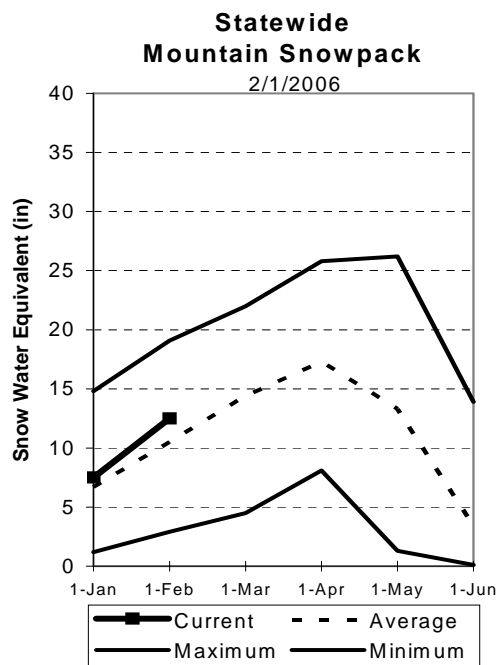
Mountain precipitation during January was 134% of average statewide. Precipitation was lower in southern Utah (88%) and much higher in the north (157%). This brings the seasonal accumulation (Oct-Jan) to 115% of average statewide. A dry fall and early winter has reduced soil moisture values considerably and this could negatively impact spring runoff.

RESERVOIRS

Storage in 41 of Utah's key irrigation reservoirs is at 67% of capacity. This is an increase of 25% from last year. Reservoirs across the State have been making steady gains in storage. Bear Lake really is the last reservoir to remain in an extremely low condition due to the prolonged drought.

STREAMFLOW

Snowmelt streamflows are expected to be much below average to much above average across the state of Utah this year. Forecast streamflows range from 10% on Recapture Creek near Blanding to 162% of average for Wheeler Creek on the Ogden Basin. Most flows are forecast to be in the 60% to 130% range. Overall water supply conditions are improving in the north and declining in the south.



Statewide Basin Reservoir Storage

